Hon. Hugh McCulloch.
with the Respects
of A. O. Bradford

ADDRESS

OF

EX-GOVERNOR BRADFORD,

AT THE DEDICATION OF THE

Antietam National Cemetery,

SEPTEMBER 17th, 1867.

Baltimore:
CON'S MONUMENTAL BOOK AND JOB PRINTING ESTABLISHMENT,
Corner of Gay and Lombard Streets.
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ADDRESS.

We have met here to-day, my countrymen, on one of the most memorable of the battle-fields of our civil war, and we stand upon a site selected from the midst of it as an appropriate resting place for those who here laid down their lives as a sacrifice to the cause of free government and a national Union. We have come at the instance of the Trustees, to whom the subject has been more especially committed, to dedicate, by some public and official proceeding, on this the anniversary of the battle, the spot so selected, hallowed as it is already, with every hill around it, in the heart of the nation. To unite in this ceremony, the President of the United States, several members of his Cabinet, members of the national Legislature, Governors or other distinguished representatives of most of the States whose citizens formed the army of the Union, have honored us with their presence, meaning, I am sure, for themselves and those they represent, to express by that presence their enduring gratitude to the soldiers living or dead who so nobly stood by them in their darkest hour of trial. We are pleased, also, to have the opportunity of welcoming so many of the distinguished representatives of foreign Powers, who on this occasion have honored us with their presence, reminding us of the peaceful and pleasant relations we at present maintain with the other Governments of the world. With such a company around me, and this vast throng in front, I feel, as you may well imagine, to the fullest extent, the responsibility of the duty with which I have been honored; an honor for which I am doubtless chiefly indebted to the accidental circumstance that I was, to some extent, officially connected with the initiation of the cemetery, so far at least as the selection of its site was concerned.

When, directly after the battle of Antietam, an order was issued by the Executive of Maryland returning thanks to the officers and men of the Union army who had so successfully expelled the invader from our State, the Commanding General of that army, to whom it was transmitted, responded to it in terms that challenged our attention. Expressing, on

behalf of the Army of the Potomac, their thanks for our appreciation of their achievements, and their hopes that no rebel army would again pollute our State, he concluded by committing to us the remains of their gallant comrades who now rested beneath its soil. A commission so touchingly confided to the people of the State, to say nothing of the duty otherwise incumbent on them, could never become with them a subject of indifference or neglect, and at the first meeting, therefore, of their representatives in the General Assembly, of January, 1864, an act was passed, authorizing the purchase of a part of the battle-field for the reception of its dead, and an appropriation of $5,000 placed at the command of the Governor for that purpose. Directly thereafter he visited the ground, examined it, and after consultation with prominent citizens, selected this spot, embracing in its view the most interesting points of the field of battle, as the proper site for the proposed cemetery. Subsequent legislation increased the State's appropriation to $15,000; trustees were appointed to superintend the work; other States came generously forward to participate in the undertaking, and by their united efforts it is hoped that the cemetery will become in time a place worthy the noble purpose to which we to-day devote it, and of the nation to whom the charge of it should properly belong.

In recurring to the events, which, in connection with this day's proceedings, seem to require a brief notice at our hands, it is a subject of congratulation that we can survey them at present from a stand point which ought to secure for them a calm and dispassionate consideration. Those influences of passion or policy which to some extent are almost inseparable from all accounts of military operations, prepared while the war itself is raging, are happily, it is to be hoped, at an end, or if any still linger, they should find no place on such an occasion as this. Yet in reviewing the details of the sanguinary conflict to which we are about to refer, we find some difficulty, with all the assistance that established peace and the lapse of time have furnished, to fix with proper historical accuracy some of the facts immediately connected with it, more especially the precise force of the Confederate army in that action. The number of the Union army engaged therein, computed as it has been not only from official records, but these records made up after ample time had elapsed for the correction of errors, may be considered as authentically established. It comprised 87,164 men of all arms. In regard to the Confederate force, the accounts are more

conflicting. The Union commander, in estimating it at upward of 97,000 men, basing his estimate on all the information received from prisoners, deserters and refugees, has probably overstated the number, while, on the other hand, our knowledge of the size of that army shortly before it crossed into Maryland would warrant us in saying that the straggling to which its commanders chiefly ascribe its subsequent reduction, must have exceeded all straggling ever known in the history of armies, if, when it reached the Antietam, it numbered only 40,000 men. General Lee, I believe, in a report prepared by him a few days after the action, does say that he went into it with only that number, but in that reckoning he must undoubtedly have excluded the three divisions which, under A. P. Hill, McLaws and Walker, he had several days before detached to different points to aid in the investment of Harper's Ferry, that had not retnrned at the commencement of the action on the evening of the 16th, but came in most opportunely to his support before its conclusion on the following day. This inference is rendered certain by other Southern accounts of the number engaged. Confederate historians and newspapers in those days, however, under certain circumstances, they might at times, have attempted to deceive us by an inflated account of their military power, were by no means given to such an exaggeration, when the battle was over and they were summing up its incidents; yet a leading newspaper at Richmond, professing to give, four days afterward, authentic particulars of the battle, declared that it was opened on the 16th of September with all their available force, "60,000 strong." A later, and looking to the means of information enjoyed, probably a still more reliable authority, a Confederate historian who has published a "Southern History of the War," in describing the battle of Antietam, states that for half the day it was fought on the Confederate side with "a force of 45,000," and for the remaining half, "with no more than an aggregate of 70,000 men." I think, therefore, that the discrepancies in the Confederate accounts of their force have been the result of the different periods of the action to which they have severally referred, some having regard to the time that preceded the arrival of their divisions from the neighborhood of the ferry, and others including these divisions in their statements. All things, therefore, considered, and allowing for that portion of our force that could not take part in the action, there could not have been much difference in the effective strength of the two armies; but if such a difference did exist,

and in favor of the Union army, it was more than compensated to the Confederates, not only by their choice of position but by other influences, which, justice to all concerned, requires us now to consider.

It may be confidently affirmed that at no time during the progress of the rebellion did the loyal heart of the country doubt its ultimate result; yet it is equally certain that there were seasons when it quivered with emotion as it contemplated the results of particular campaigns or despaired for a moment at the partial failure of long-cherished expeditions. At no period of the war were such feelings more rife than during the Summer of 1862. In the early Spring of that year the Peninsular expedition had set forth, and the people of the loyal States looked with anxious solicitude to its results and with earnest hopes that it would retrieve the disasters of the preceding year and place the rebel capitol at our command. In every movement of the army in that direction, in all its marches, all its toils, its victories and reverses from Yorktown to Williamsburgh, on the Chickahominy, at Fair Oaks, Gaines' Mill, Malvern, and on the James, it never took a step to front or rear, that it did not carry with it by an inseparable sympathy the throbbing heart of the people. So high-wrought had become the popular feeling in that connection, that the slightest indication of success or defeat in the movements of that army exerted, for a time at least, an influence on the public mind entirely disproportioned to any intrinsic importance attaching to it. It was just when this excitement of the public pulse was at its height, after witnessing the heroic struggles of that army for so many weeks, with hopes and fears alternately predominating, that we were suddenly startled by the information that transports were conveying it back to the neighborhood of Washington. The people did not pause to consider whether or how far ulterior objects justified that movement; they saw only in it the confession that for the present Richmond was beyond our reach. Incidents connected with it revealed to them also the fact—surmises in regard to which had already disturbed them—that there was an unfortunate difference of opinion between the commanding General of that army and the powers that controlled his movements; the reluctance with which he yielded to the peremptory orders for the change of his base of operations soon became known and excited criticisms unavoidably injurious in their tendency. Our friends did not care to inquire, and certainly I shall enter into no such inquiry to-day, who was right or who

were wrong; it was enough and bad enough to know that the harmony which had once marked our military councils had given place to ill-concealed murmurings and misgivings. In this moody condition of the public mind the Army of the Potomac, necessarily to some extent influenced by the same circumstances, its ranks thinned by the casualties of a series of hard-fought battles, and enervated by the climatic influences of the peninsula, reached Acquia Creek and Alexandria in the last week of August. The occurrences which there awaited it were scarcely of a character to make amends for recent disappointments, or to restore that well-poised public confidence which was becoming dangerously disturbed.

About two months before this period the authorities at Washington, gathering up the national forces which had been operating under several commanders in the Valley and other parts of Northern Virginia, had massed and reorganized them, under the name of the Army of Virginia, and placed them under command of Major-General Pope, who had been called from a western department for the purpose. Assuming that command he commenced active military operations about the middle of July; his proclamation on that occasion rang out so cheerily and confidently in tone that the public pricked up its ear and, readily forbearing any criticism of style, accepted the substance as an assurance of a more vigorous policy than had before prevailed, and as foreshadowing a system of tactics which even if we failed before Richmond, would compensate us with success elsewhere. But on this line too, disappointments awaited us, all the keener for the expectations thus excited. Our first reverse occurred at Cedar Mountain on the 9th of August, when the corps commanded by General Banks, arrayed unsupported against three divisions of the rebel army under Jackson, Ewell and Hill, most advantageously posted, after accomplishing all that heroic men could against overwhelming odds, was forced back with severe loss. The withdrawal simultaneously with this action of the Army of the Potomac from the James River, enabled Lee to move a large portion of his command to the support of Jackson, who was now in front of Pope, and compelled the latter to commence a retrograde movement, which continued from point to point until he reached the District line. During all the last week of August, Pope's army was kept in almost continual action, leaving little or no time for refreshment or rest; engaged thus every day, although supported to some extent by a part of the army now arriving from the Peninsula, displaying conspicu-

ous gallantry, and evincing the most heroic powers of endurance, they were nevertheless gradually forced back by Lee's army, the greater part of which had now arrived from Richmond, until after a last ineffectual effort, on the old battlefield of Bull Run, in which fell that beau ideal of a soldier, the gallant Kearney, faint and foot-sore, on the second of September they fell back within the fortifications of Washington.

You will not, I am sure, so far misunderstand me as to suppose, that in referring thus briefly to the campaign of Gen. Pope, I have any design to criticise it. I disclaim as well any such power as such a purpose. Whether it failed through his fault or that of others, or without fault anywhere, are questions requiring far more skill in military manœuvres as well as a more accurate knowledge of facts than I pretend to possess. Nor is the cause of the failure at all material as regards its influence. I advert to it in this connection simply as one of those unfortunate antecedents immediately preceding the march of Lee into Maryland, which was calculated to exert a depressing influence as well upon the public mind as on the spirits of the army, on which alone we now depended to oppose his passage. That army was to be composed of what remained of those two once formidable organizations, the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Virginia, constituted each of them of material, better than which the world never saw, but returning simultaneously from the fields of their recent operations, with such heavy losses, so jaded and war-worn, so keenly sensitive, as we may well suppose, to the disappointments the country might feel in the hopes formed of their achievements, that in the new and formidable invasion they were now so suddenly called on to repel, nothing but the sternest sense of patriotic duty and the most determined devotion to the great cause for which they had already sacrificed so much, could have possibly sustained them.

In that trying hour the first provision to be made, was for the reorganization of these shattered armies and the selection of a commander who could accomplish it and then lead the united host. Whatever doubt the Government authorities, or any of them, or the people of the country, or any part of them, might then or since have entertained of the military abilities of Gen. McClellan, there were few then and probably still fewer to-day, who, in the exigency then existing, would question the wisdom of the order that committed to him this command. His services in a like capacity and under circum-

stances so strikingly similar that the coincidence is worthy of note, must have been fresh in the recollection of both Government and people. At the time of our earliest great disaster, the first battle of Bull Run, he was conducting active operations in West Virginia, and the very day after that unfortunate affair, a telegram from the President directing him to turn over his command to another, summoned him to Washington; placed there by the President's order in chief command, he was in less than a week after that reverse, bringing order out of the confusion, which for a while prevailed. Now, other disasters culminating on the same unfortunate field, demanded again the services of a soldier, who, possessing the skill to reorganize our broken columns, could so command their confidence as to inspire them with the enthusiasm necessary to forget disaster. That the administration, without any disparagement to other distinguished leaders, chose the right man for such an emergency, few, I repeat, will at this day venture to deny. But little time remained for preparation, Lee and his army exhilarated at the thought that their long beleagured capital was at length relieved, encouraged by their recent successes near Manassas, and stimulated by the prospect of the rich supplies, which here and along the fertile Cumberland Valley, awaited their approach, had, by rapid marching, within four days after Pope's army retired within the Washington intrenchments, crossed the Potomac and encamped around Frederick City. McClellan, reorganizing as he marched, set forth to intercept him; embarrassed all the time by the doubts which enveloped Lee's designs, fully alive to the various vital interests involved in them, compelled, for the time, to turn his back upon Washington, and yet well aware and frequently reminded that after all, this might be Lee's objective point, and his movements in other directions meant only as a feint, with the capital of Pennsylvania and the emporium of Maryland both menaced by the enemy, and the citizens of each watching with anxious concern McClellan's movements, with the natural apprehension that the course of his march might so far uncover their several cities as to open the way to Lee's approach, we may imagine to-day, though even now can scarcely appreciate, the responsibilities of the Union commander, and understand some of the reasons for what, in the nervous anxiety of that moment, might have been considered by some as too tardy a pursuit. He was, however, on the right track; the van of his army reached Frederick on the twelfth of Septem-

ber, Lee, with the greater part of his command, having left it two days before.

Here, before following the subsequent movements of these armies, allow me to advert briefly to the reception that awaited them respectively on this new theatre of the war on the north of the Potomac. Subsequently, in the course of its progress, rebel raids and invasions were matters of frequent occurrence, and came to be regarded by us as a thing of course whenever our usual summer drought reduced the river to a fordable condition. This, however, was our first hostile invasion, and on that and other accounts was regarded by the people of the country, and especially of this State, with absorbing interest and anxiety. The loyal citizens of the North had been taught to believe that the loyalty of Maryland had, at best, but an apochryphal existence; that as a patriotic and spontaneous impulse it was limited to a few, whilst as regarded the great body of our people, it was but a pretended and superficial display, induced chiefly by the presence of the national force. So confident in the early stages of the rebellion had been the appeals of our secessionists, so exorbitant their claims to an assumed social and commercial importance, and so clamorous their denunciations of what they denominate an odious Federal ban, forcing the action of the people into a channel contrary to its natural inclination, that there seemed for a time some excuse for such an opinion, and a few even of our own citizens, who had not watched that strong patriotic undercurrent, on which, as on a full mountain stream, the masses of our people were from the first borne onward, came sometimes themselves to the reluctant conclusion that the outside estimate of our loyalty might possibly be true. Gen. Lee, doubtless confiding in the same representations, only more highly exaggerated, chanced to select as favorable a moment for himself as possible, for putting these theories to the test. To say nothing of the despondency already noticed, resulting from recent disappointments, a process had just commenced better calculated than anything that had occurred to awaken the people of the country to a practical sense of the grim realities of war. The President, on the first of July, having issued a call for three hundred thousand volunteers, followed it on the fourth of August with an order for the draft of a like number of militia; the preliminary details for that draft had been just completed, and the enrolling officers sent forth on their mission, as Lee made his appearance north of the Potomac. The order for a draft had something startling in the ideas it suggested; no one

who was subject to the process had ever witnessed its application; the country had only a kind of traditional knowledge of the character of the proceeding—all the more exciting for its very vagueness.

It was in this condition of things that Lee encamped his army about Frederick, and none knew better than himself how to take advantage of it. Appointing as the Provost-Marshal of that city a former resident, who, having once been a person of some political influence, had, in the early days of the rebellion, attached himself to its fortunes, and observing the most scrupulous forbearance toward the citizens, he next issued to them a proclamation, every sentence of which was studiously adapted to their supposed tastes and political sympathies, and which, if the facts had corresponded with the suggestions of Southern sympathizers and Northern skeptics, would have brought them in crowds to the Confederate standard. It expressed the deepest sympathy for the "wrongs and outrages" they had suffered; it reminded them of the obligations that bound them to the South by "the strongest social, political and commercial ties;" it depicted the profound indignation of their sister States at the spectacle they presented of "a conquered province;" it appealed to their State pride, alluded to "the military usurpations of armed strangers," the arrest and imprisonment of their citizens, and, "the faithful and manly protest" made against such outrages by a venerable and illustrious jurist, who, being a former citizen of this town, was known to be held by its inhabitants in high respect and esteem. Then reminding them that the people of Maryland possessed a spirit too lofty to submit to such a Government, it gave them to understand that the Confederate army had come among them to aid them in "throwing off this foreign yoke," and all that was necessary was their co-operation Was there ever so fair an opportunity for a semi-loyal, secession-loving people, living under a Federal ban, threatened with a Federal draft, and, awaiting only the opportunity to escape and throw themselves into the arms of their Southern friends! How did they respond to this opportunity and these eloquent appeals? A Confederate officer, who seems to have accompanied the expedition, and has since written an account of it, tells the story in a few words. Confessing to the disappointment that awaited those who expected the Marylanders to rush to arms, he tells us, that on the contrary, "they rushed into their houses and slammed their doors." "The rebels," says he, "were regarded not as friends, but enemies, the inhabitants were Union," and the general sentiment was:

"Wait, wearers of the gray, the patriots in blue are coming." When they did come, who that saw can ever forget, what heart that even now does not throb the quicker as it remembers the change from the dogged, moody, scowling and stifled condition in which the presence of the Confederates had for four days kept that people tortured, to the outburst of joyous, enthusiastic, exuberant, and irrepressible loyalty that rung out from cellar to house-top as the boys in blue pressed on upon their rear. All along their way, wherever they appeared, in the towns or among the log cabins of the mountain, up went the national banner; hid away, some of them, until this day; many, doubtless, improvised for the occasion, and exacting tribute, I dare say, of many a discarded ribbon and threadbare wrapper; sometimes faded and soiled, it may have been, and utter regardless of the proportions required by army regulations, but every stripe and every star was there, and better still, every heart that beat beneath it was overpoweringly full of the sacred cause of which it was the symbol. Yet to this day, with that and every other ordeal—and that was neither the first nor last—by which Maryland loyalty has been tested, there are those who still make it the subject of an ungenerous sneer. I am happy, however, to believe that it never comes from that gallant host that accompanied her sons to the field, but usually from those whose well-calculated distance from the scene of conflict placed them as far out of the reach of information as of danger.

When Lee evacuated Frederick on the twelfth of September, directing his course toward this county, he doubtless supposed that the reticent policy and strategic manœuvres he had thus far so successfully pursued would still have ~~its~~ influence on McClellan's movements, leaving him in doubt as to where the threatened blow would ultimately fall; but by one of those rare occurrences which some may call accident, and others a special Providence, there fell into McClellan's hands on the day of his arrival at Frederick, a copy of Lee's order of march, dated the day before he left that city, and negligently left there by one of his officers. This told the whole story of his contemplated movements, and, possessed of that information, a new vigor was infused into the Union host. Directing the corps of Gen. Franklin toward Pleasant Valley, that it might, if possible, reach and relieve Harper's Ferry before it should be captured by the force Lee had detailed for the purpose, McClellan, with the main body of the Union Army, moved forward toward the South Mountain, on the track Lee himself had taken. The latter having already

passed on toward Boonsboro and Hagerstown, hearing on the evening of the thirteenth that McClellan was pushing on by the way of Turner's Gap, and surprised no doubt at the unwonted vigor and rapidity of his present movements, feeling too that unless his progress could be arrested, his own well-concerted plans might be frustrated, sent back Hill and Longstreet, with the greater portion of their commands, to check him at that mountain pass. Reaching its crest in advance of the Union Army, it is easy to perceive how even a smaller force than these two leaders then commanded could, with the advantage which their position secured, hold in check for a time our advancing column, struggling up its eastern slope; but our men, though encountering a murderous fire from the ridges around them, were not to be long arrested in their progress. Pushing up the craggy steep, they forced back, step by step, the Confederate riflemen, who were assailing them from behind trees and stone fences, and as the last rays of the setting sun fell upon the Union banner, it was floating triumphant on the summit of the ridge. It cost us, however, fifteen hundred of the flower of our army, including the skillful and valiant Gen. Reno, who, with the advance throughout the day, was killed just before its close, while reconnoitering in front.

The morning of the fifteenth dawned upon the Union Army the sole occupants of the mountain, the Confederates having retired during the night, and McClellan resuming his march, halted that afternoon on the east bank of the Antietam. The evening was passed in assigning positions to his several corps, posting his batteries, and making preparations for crossing next morning. Lee having previously reached and crossed the stream, had secured the choice of positions, an advantage which he did not fail to improve. A telegram from President Lincoln, dated at Washington, about the hour that McClellan reached the Antietam, conveyed to him the President's last command; in Mr. Lincoln's own earnest and sententious style, it merely said: "God bless you and all with you; destroy the rebel army if possible." With this parting benediction they bivouacked that night on the eastern bank of the stream. On the morning of the sixteenth the rebel batteries, occupying commanding positions on the various heights upon this side the creek, opened fire upon our ranks, but with how little effect may be inferred from the account of Gen. Hill, who, in a subsequent report of the action, describes it as the "most melancholy farce of the war," they being unable, as he says, to cope with the "Yankee guns." After

some little delay required to make an alteration of the position of some of the corps, Gen. Hooker, who had been intrusted with the duty of turning the enemy's left flank, crossed his command by an upper ford, and not long afterward encountered the troops of Gen. Hood, who, in anticipation of our movement, had been transferred from the enemy's right wing to his left, to strengthen that part of his line. It was nearly dark before the troops of Hooker and Hood met, and after a brief but spirited contest, in which the Pennsylvania Reserves, under Gen. Meade, opened the action, the Confederate advance was forced back, when night intervening, the combatants rested on their arms so near together that it is said some of the pickets of the two lines unconsciously intermingled.

The battle of the seventeenth opened at the dawn of day on the spot where the skirmish of the previous evening had closed; each side seems to have looked to this point as the one to be particularly strengthened, and as though anticipating the tremendous struggle of which it was to be the centre. Gen. Mansfields's corps—composed of the two divisions of Gens. Green and Williams—had crossed over in the night and taken post a mile to the rear of Gen. Hooker; while on the Confederate side Gen. Jackson had brought one of his divisions to the front, and substituting two of his brigades for those of Hood, that had suffered from the engagement of the previous evening, placed the other—the old Stonewall Division—in reserve in the woods, on the west of the Hagerstown Road.

In the whole history of the battle fields of the rebellion, it would be perhaps difficult to find a spot which for an entire day was assailed and defended with such persevering, obstinate and concentrated valor as the one to which I now refer, embracing the ground on both sides of the road just mentioned, and in close proximity to yonder little church, that nestles now so quietly in the margin of the woods. From early dawn till dark the conflict surged and swelled across it in one continual tide, advancing and receding as reinforcements from the one side or the other came to the support of their comrades. It was opened on our side with the three divisions of Gens. Meade, Doubleday and Ricketts, forming Gen. Hooker's corps, who, after an hour of fearful carnage, succeeded in driving back Jackson's advanced line. Before, however, their exulting cheers had fairly ceased, they were themselves compelled to retire before his veteran reserves that now came to his relief, supported by Hill's division and Hood's refreshed brigades. The corps of Gen. Mansfield

coming next to our support, reinforced the shattered command of Hooker, and recovering the ground that had been lost, swept onward again to the road and seized a corner of the woods beyond. Again, however, our tenure was but temporary; both our corps commanders had fallen, the veteran Mansfield and the intrepid Hooker, the one mortally and the other so painfully wounded as to be compelled to leave the field, and their commands fearfully thinned, were again forced to fall back. Just as they were retiring, two divisions of Gen. Sumner's corps coming fresh upon the field, hurled back once more the rebel line and held for a time definitive possession of the woods about the little church. The divisions of Gens. Richardson and French falling in about this time to the support of Sumner, pushed valiantly to the front, and the tide of battle was once more flooding in our favor, when, just as victory seemed within our grasp, two fresh Confederate divisions, under McLaws and Walker, the one just arrived from Harper's Ferry, and the other detached from their right wing, turned again for a time the fortunes of the day, and once more drove back our tottering line over that hard-fought field. Two other of our division commanders had been now lost to us, the lamented Richardson and the heroic Gen. Sedgwick, the former falling mortally wounded, and the latter, though wounded several times, still struggling to keep the field. To and fro the contest had now swayed for seven hours; it was afternoon, and the combatants stood, as it were, at bay, each apparently confident of their power to defend, but doubtful of their ability to assail. Now, most opportunely, appeared another auxiliary on the scene, and we may imagine the tumultuous joy that reanimated our exhausted troops as, turning their eyes toward yonder creek, they beheld two divisions of Gen. Franklin's corps, freshly arrived from Pleasant Valley and hastening forward to their support. Under their gallant leaders, Slocum and Smith, they swept onward in a resistless charge; running and cheering as they ran, they dashed across that downtrodden cornfield, cleared the woods of their Confederate occupants, and at last held final possession of the ground so often lost and won; until

> "Night her course began and over Heaven
> Inducing darkness, grateful truce imposed
> And silence on the odious din of war."

On the extreme left of our line the Ninth Army Corps, under Gen. Burnside, occupied during the forenoon the left

bank of the Antietam, near the lower bridge, waiting a favorable opportunity for forcing a passage. The precipitous character of the banks of the creek at that point, and the advantageous positions secured by the enemy's batteries along these heights to the west of it, postponed, it would seem, that opportunity until about one o'clock, but at that hour a gallant charge of the Fifty-first New York, the Fifty-first Pennsylvania and Thirty-fifth Massachusetts Regiments, carried the bridge, and crossing by that and a neighboring ford, the whole corps passed over. Afterward assailing yonder heights from which a rebel battery had been pouring upon them a constant and destructive fire, they succeeded in dislodging the enemy, and it is said that some of their assailing force nearly reached the village; but here, as on our right, victory seemed to vibrate. A. P. Hill, with his division, by a rapid march from Harper's Ferry, which they left that morning, reached the ground in the afternoon, and joining his command to the rebel right wing, their united efforts drove back our troops from their advanced position; but rallying with spirit and supported by our batteries on the eastern bank of the creek, they, after desperate fighting, in which Gen. Rodman, one of their division commanders, fell mortally wounded, were enabled still to maintain their stand upon its western shore, while the rebels fell back to the heights as darkness closed the day.

The bridge has been known in the neighborhood ever since the battle as the Burnside Bridge, which name, for its pastoral as well as patriotic significance, it will probably retain forever.

Thus ended, only for want of light to pursue it farther, a battle that had raged for nearly fourteen hours, and which, beyond doubt, was the fiercest and bloodiest of the war. Twelve thousand of our dead and wounded warriors, and at least as many more of the enemy, lay stretched upon the field.

I have, of course, not ventured to attempt more than the merest outline of some of the most prominent points of the action. To note the movements of the various divisions, brigades and regiments, their marches, manœuvres and combinations, and the names of the officers who led them, even if I possessed the information necessary for the purpose, and that would insure me against doing injustice to any, would far exceed the limits permitted to such an address. I should rejoice to be able to refer by name to every man who on that day did his duty, from the General-in-Chief to the humblest subordinate in the ranks; but I have the satisfaction of knowing

that they are all registered elsewhere, and that neither their names or deeds are dependent on this ephemeral record.

Viewing these hills and valleys as we do to-day, in the full luxuriance of their autumnal beauty, restored by the indomitable energy of their thrifty population to the condition they presented before hostile armies selected them as the theatre of their contest, and then calling up to memory or imagination the spectacle they exhibited when that contest closed, and the harvest of death lay heaped in horrid swaths all over their undulating surface, and how impressive, almost appaling, is the sense of the destruction which a few brief hours had accomplished. The day before the battle, this region, one of the most beautiful and productive of the State, in its orchards and meadows, corn-fields and pastures, woodlands and water courses, presented

"A happy rural seat of various view."

that filled the eye of the visitor with delight, inferior only to that of the happy husbandmen, its owners. They, thus far knowing little of war save by its distant echoes, awoke on the morning of the seventeenth of September, 1862, to all its dread realities.

"Hark to that roar, whose swift and deafening peals
In countless echoes through the mountains ring;
Now swells the intermingling din; the jar,
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb;
The falling tree, the shriek, the groan, the shout—
The ceaseless clangor and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage! Loud and more loud
The discord grows, till pale death shuts the scene,
And o'er the conqueror and the conquered draws
His cold and bloody shroud!"

But let us pass from this melancholy retrospect to the more agreeable contemplation of the tribute due to the valiant dead that lie here now at rest around us. The posthumous honors rendered to departed patriots are commended to us by the example of the noblest nations of antiquity, and are prompted by those impulses of the human heart which in all ages seek to perpetuate some record or reminiscence of the good and the brave. In the best days of the republics of old, these mortuary observances were far more frequent and impressive than in modern times; they not only embalmed the bodies of their warriors and statesmen, but their funeral ceremonies, the eulogies pronounced over them, and the monuments erected to their memory, were recognized as of national obligation. Their exploits were chronicled and elaborated by the poets and orators of their nation, and have been

handed down to the present day as a classic theme on which the youthful mind still delights to dwell. It was a custom with the Athenians to appoint every year a time for the observance of solemn funeral rites over the remains of their heroes who had fallen during the year; their bones were collected together, their friends were invited to be present, their remains were decorated as the fancy or affection of those friends might suggest, and after three days thus employed, these remnants of mortality were carried in solemn funeral pomp to a public temple prepared for their reception. Nor were they forgotten whose mouldering forms it had been impossible to recover; for them or in memory of them an empty bier, the most gorgeous in the procession was especially dedicated, and a sepulchre situated in the costliest suburb of the city, received the sumptuous coffins, the empty and the full. We have as yet established no such national anniversaries, nor provided any such gorgeous pageantry; no stored urn or cypress coffin may contain the remains of our soldiers dead; many of them doubtless have never yet been gathered within any recognized cemetery, and still occupy the shallow grave on the margin of the battle-field or near some hospital site, their last resting-place probably altogether unmarked, or if marked at all, only by a rough stake and occasionally a few rude letters; but whatever be its condition, or wherever it may be—on the banks of the Mississippi, or among the mountains of Pennsylvania, in the morasses of the Chickahominy, or in this quiet and well ordered cemetery—Greece nor Rome, in their palmiest days, ever offered up costlier sacrifices in the cause of human freedom, than "the hearts one pregnant with celestial fire" which these rude sepulchres entomb. In ancient times it was undoubtedly true, especially as regarded the honors to living men—and probably no age may be altogether exempt from the imputation—that in the costly statues erected to, and the munificent ovations showered upon the successful soldier or accomplished statesman, there lurked not unfrequently some personal consideration mingling with the motives that suggested them. Sometimes it was fear that prompted the timid thus to propitiate the wrath of the powerful. Sometimes it was a servile adulation, that in the time-serving sought by such means to secure a recompense, in the shape of other honors or emoluments to be reciprocated. It was doubtless the knowledge of such corruptions, and an appreciation of the motives that should always control such memorials, that prompted Cato, when once asked by a friend why no statues had been erected to him while Rome was

crowded with so many others, to reply as he did, that he had much rather his countrymen should inquire why he had no statues, than why he had any; but the character and circumstances of the honors we are here to render to our patriot dead, not only vindicate their motive, but in that motive itself is found the very germ of the honor we would confer.

Let statues or monuments to the living or the dead tower ever so high, the true honor after all is not in the polished tablet or towering column, but in that pure, spontaneous and unaffected gratitude of the people that enshrines the memory of the honored one in the heart, and transmits it from age to age long after such costly structures have disappeared. The only honor accorded to Miltiades, the great deliverer of Athens, was to be represented in a picture painted by order of its citizens at the head of the other nine commanders of the heroic ten thousand, animating his followers to the attack of the hostile force which outnumbered them ten to one; and yet that simple painting, embalmed in the affections of succeeding generations, existed for centuries thereafter, while the three hundred statues which in a later and corrupter age were erected by the same people, in honor of Demetrius, were all demolished, even in his lifetime. Thus in our heart would we enshrine the memory of the Union soldier; generations yet unborn shall recount to their offspring the history of their valor, and long after brass and marble have crumbled into dust, shall their names be preserved as the men who perished to perpetuate what their fathers had so struggled to establish, this heaven-appointed Government of popular freedom.

A sepulchre, as I have said, was formerly prepared for the heroes of ancient Greece in the most conspicuous suburb of their cities; this custom, however, had one memorable exception, and for which this day's solemnities on the field of Antietam furnish an appropriate parallel. Such was the extraordinary valor displayed by those who fell fighting against the Persian host on the memorable battle field of Marathon, that the Athenians determined that their sepulchre should be separated and distinguished from those of their other heroes. The most honorable distinction they could suggest was to bury them on the field where they had fallen; and thus this little marshy plain, immortalized by this battle of more two thousand years ago, was pointed out to succeeding ages by the lofty mound, around which many a tourist has since lingered, and which to this day marks the spot where the Athenian heroes fell.

May not imagination, as it seeks to portray the future of this great American Republic, without any overstraining of its powers, see the coming time—distant it possibly may be, but none the less desirable or certain—when her sons from every State shall seek this little hamlet for its hallowed memories of the past, and coming from the South as well as North, reunited in fact as well as theory, in affection as well as formality, shall stand here together as pilgrims at a common shrine, and forgetting the feuds of the past, save only the mighty powers which their results developed, mutually admit, as they appeal to the records of this field, that they have sprung from the same stock, are united in the same destiny, entitled to the same respect, and animated by the same heroic and patriotic impulses.

This day, my countrymen—the seventeenth of September—happens to be the anniversary of another event in our political history, not less memorable than the one which to-day, more particularly engages our attention. In some respects it is so intimately connected with the considerations which the occasion suggests, that it is scarcely proper it should pass without notice. It was upon this day, eighty years ago, that the Representatives of our ancestors, with Washington at their head, after four months' deliberation, adopted the Federal Constitution—an instrument so remarkable for the circumstances that gave birth to it, for the wonderful prosperity which sprung from it, for the reverence with which, from generation to generation, it has been handed down to us, that there has probably been no record of a like character which has exerted so important an influence on the history of a Government or the rise and progress of a people. The political condition of the country at the time of its adoption, in some of its aspects, was not unlike the present. We had just concluded a war, upon the issue of which depended the existence of the nation; that war combined with other circumstances, had led to the formation of parties so widely differing in some of their theories of government that there seemed but little hope of constructing it upon any plan on which the two extremes would ever unite. Upon one side political leaders were striving to establish a strong and consolidated Government, ignoring almost the Government of the States, while on the other were those who were for investing the latter with all substantial authority, and making the General Government little more than their general agent. These leaders—honest, doubtless all of them, in their opinions—had by their continual discussion and the widely

different views they promulgated, brought the country to a critical condition and filled the minds of its reflecting people with serious fears that the great results of the war would be swept away by these jarring elements. In consequence alone of these dissensions, and the mutual jealousies and suspicions they engendered, four years elapsed after the close of the war before any consent could be procured, either from Congress or the States, for the assembling of a Constitutional Convention, and with the acknowledged imperfections of the existing Articles of Confederation, and amidst the most disheartening embarrassments, the result chiefly of those imperfections, the country staggered along as best it could, without either an Executive or Judicial Department. Then at last there assembled that illustrious body of statesmen that framed the Constitution under which we live. They represented undoubtedly constituencies maintaining each of the theories of government to which I have adverted; but, mindful of the condition of the country, resolved, if possible, to rescue it, and with this noble purpose resisting the impatient behests of party, they renounced the ultraisms which distinguished both the consolidation and State right schools, and provided a Government which so judiciously combined the two principles, and so distinctly assigned to each its proper sphere, that the moderate and reflecting of all parties united in its support, and the Constitution received the unanimous ratification of the States. After the lapse of three-quarters of a century, and after it had elevated us to a point of national importance and renown, which its most ardent advocates could never have predicted, it was destined to encounter its first great trial.

I am not about to recur to the history of the rebellion, to the passions that prompted its leaders, or the metaphysical plausibilities by which they seduced their followers; but it was only after the theories to which they had been long attached had been allied with more substantial and powerful interests, that they ventured to lay violent hands on that work of our fathers to which they and all of us had so often sworn allegiance. How it resulted it is scarcely necessary to remind you. The people, though occasionally differing on questions of construction of doubtful clauses of the Constitution, had yet been trained in such habits of reverence for all its undisputed provisions, that no section and no party that ever ventured to express contrary sentiments, could, unless blinded by insane passion, have foreseen aught but ultimate ruin and annihilation; and although the late rebellion, by a

combination of various interests, influences and issues, sustained itself for four years with wonderful energy, and though at times and to a limited extent, there were subordinate issues invoked also against it, yet the great, original, abiding and conclusive force that filled our armies and fought our battles, was the resolute purpose of the people to stand by the Constitution of our fathers and the Union it had established. Upon this line we commenced the war, and on this line, thanks to our noble army and its distinguished commander, we fought it out to signal and complete success. But now, when we had safely passed what for the last thirty years had been generally reckoned the greatest danger to the Constitution, and that and other results of the conflict had filled us with the highest hopes of the future and given us as we supposed the assurance of complete tranquility for the present, suddenly evil influences are found still at work; sometimes in the shape of fears, honest or simulated, of dangers in the future; sometimes prompted by vindictive recollections of supposed injuries in the past; more frequently than either, perhaps, instigated by old party leaders who play upon these fears and memories with no other object than to recover some old office or power they have lost, or to retain others they have more lately won; until our exultation at the results we have achieved is arrested by our apprehension of evils yet to come.

Think not for a moment, my friends, that I am about to desecrate the solemnities of such an occasion by any discussion of the partisan topics of the day. God forbid that the time should ever come, or party lines be ever so drawn, that a plea for the Constitution shall be reckoned as a badge of party fealty. The only party in whose behalf I would this day raise a voice, is the party of moderation and conciliation; the only party against which I would this day warn you, is made up of those ultras of all sides, whose agitations have contributed so largely to the disasters of the past, and which, if not arrested, may be the forerunner of others equally deplorable in the future. Against such agitations would I, therefore, invoke, and take this as an appropriate occasion of doing so, the moderate, disinterested, reflecting and patriotic people of the country; it was by this class, as I have already said, that the Constitution was created, and it will be by this class that it must be saved. If it still contains defects, if it is growing obsolete, or keeps not up with the progressive ideas of the age, amend it by the means which its own provisions prescribe; but while it is still acknowledged as our or-

ganic law, and we daily swear to it allegiance, let it be, in all our political controversies, the umpire whose decrees shall be final. Come the perils to it whence they may, from State rights or consolidation, let me, on this the anniversary of its adoption, in the name of the men who made it, by the memory of the men who have died for it, upon this spot where blood has been so profusely shed in its behalf, appeal to you to preserve, protect and defend it.